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men using the upper path could reach Nomal. There were ominous mutterings of a coming storm brewing in Hunza and Nagar, and it was imperative that I should be able to move troops to Nomal and reinforce the garrison at a moment's notice. The road was therefore taken in hand in November 1890, and in a couple of months we had driven a good six-foot road through the bad piece. It was not a pleasant road to ride over when it was finished, for there were sheer drops of two and three hundred feet into the river below, but it sufficed. The last hundred yards of the worst bit of cliff nearly broke our hearts. The hillside was formed of alternate layers of sand and loose water-worn stones, and, cut back as we would, we could not get to firm ground. Four times our carefully-built supporting walls went with a run. The men were in despair, even my ever-cheery Major Gokul began to despond. Then, at the men's request, we sacrificed a goat, and made offerings to the god whose business it was, erected a little cairn with a duly consecrated flag, rebuilt our walls with layers of brushwood between the stones, and our road stood. I could now sleep in peace so far as Nomal was concerned, and I turned my attention to the bad cliffs between Gilgit and Bunji, and to the road further back.

The labour question was an incessant difficulty. The people of the country were very bad at road-making, and, moreover, had already plenty of work, and I had not enough tools to employ, or money to pay, large numbers. The men of the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops could not be taken away from their drills, musketry, and hut-building. They

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had come up the autumn before made up into regiments it is true, but they had received no instruction in the use of their arms, and were useless from the military point of view when they arrived. Willing as they were, they had to be licked into shape, and taught everything from the beginning. It was out of the question to use them for road-making. I had therefore nothing but my company of sappers, and for ten months they worked on the roads practically every day, except on Sundays. It was hard on the men, for road work is very severe, but it was absolutely necessary, and I did my best by giving them extra food and pay to make it easy for them. The result was excellent; before the passes opened we had made the road to Nomal, opened a mule road between Gilgit and Bunji, a distance of thirty miles, and run a track practicable for laden animals up most of the six thousand feet of the dreadful Hattu Pir Mountain, besides improving some bridges on the road to Astor. Luckily much of the thirty miles between Gilgit and Bunji was open ground, but there were many miles of bad going, and to open a mule track through this was a triumph for my men, vile as I must admit the road was to the uninitiated. All this work kept me pretty busy, and I was in the saddle almost every day, riding backwards and forwards to inspect the work.

With the spring of 1891 from all directions came renewed rumours of trouble. The Indus valley tribes, and indeed most of my neighbours, habitually spent the winter, when there was no agricultural work to do, in discussing the advantages and disadvantages of resuming their raids on Kashmir

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territory, or of attacking each other, and in weaving plots. Embassies passed from republic to republic, and from ruler to ruler, suggesting combinations and general risings. It was the custom of the country, and as a rule it meant but little, but this year, as the scraps of information from all sides reached me, and were collated and pondered over, it seemed to me that all tended to show that real mischief was brewing. The threads I held in my hands persistently wove themselves into one pattern, and that pattern meant war.

However, it was no business of mine to meet my troubles half way, and we went about our work as usual. Thinking it would do the troops good, I moved in April with a couple of guns and some infantry to Gakuch in Punyal, forty miles from Gilgit. The road I have described before; it was an education to the officers and men of the mule battery, and also taught the infantry much that was useful. The marches, short as they were, were very severe. The Governor of Gilgit and the Kashmiri General accompanied the party, of which I was very glad. We, of course, never left the troops, and saw them over the difficult pieces. I gave the men meat rations occasionally, and we saw to their comfort ourselves. This may seem not worth mentioning, but it was a revelation to the Kashmiri officers. Most of the regimental officers and the men were already with us, grateful for the increased comfort of their quarters, for the punctual issue of pay, and for the good quality of their rations, but one and all were unaccustomed to being cared for on the march by their superiors, and appreciated

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K 702 703 the attention accordingly. Our little expedition had the best effect on the troops. On our return to Gilgit it was much discussed, and I heard with satisfaction that the Governor himself, in an assembly of the senior officers at his house, had pointed the moral. "Which of you," he said, "would have remained out in the sun on the march, and come into camp with the men? Not one. You would have all ridden on and made yourselves comfortable in camp, and left the men to look after themselves. It is the same all through; no wonder that the 'ikbal' (the fortune) of the English Government is great, and that they rule India."

000 In the beginning of May, as the snow was now melting and the forests were approachable, we began to fell timber, and to bring it down for the new quarters being built for the troops. The labour was very severe, for the mountain torrents were too violent to admit of floating logs down, and the whole of the wood had to be carried for ten miles by the men. The work was hardly completed by the autumn. We found good timber and a site for a summer camp a couple of hours' ride from my house, up a narrow valley at the head of which was a pass leading to Darel. I went up there one day in May to look at the timber, and to see if we could manage to erect a saw-mill, for we had nothing of the kind, and all sawing had to be done by hand. On my way down I heard that the expected storm had broken in Nagar.

B 661 The old chief of Nagar had a favourite son named Gauri Tham, who was married to the daughter of the Raja of Astor. I had met the boy there,